

HISTORICAL NOTES ON ARCHITECTURE.

THE origin of architecture is unknown; that, however rude, it must have been practised in some degree, is evident from the sacred writings, where we are told that Cain, the second man, "built a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enosh." Whether this city consisted of a series of huts constructed of branches and twigs of trees, like the wigwags of the American Indians, or of tents made of the skins of animals, we know not. Vitruvius, a celebrated architect in the age of Augustus, considered that men took their idea of huts from birds' nests, and constructed them of a conic figure; but finding this form inconvenient on account of its inclined sides, gave them afterwards a cubical form. Four large upright beams, on which were placed four others in a horizontal position, he considers the groundwork of the building, the intervals being filled with branches interwoven and covered with clay.

Mankind improving in the art of building, methods were discovered to make their huts more durable, and even handsome as well as convenient; the roof was raised in order to throw off the rain, wood buildings were set aside, and stately edifices of stone erected. So extraordinary, however, did architecture seem at, or a short time before, the Christian era, that Strabo and Pausanias, in conformity to an ancient custom, ascribe every architectural work of extraordinary magnitude, and to which the exertions of human labour then appeared inadequate, to the Cyclopes; and hence was that style which is supposed to have preceded the invention of the orders, termed Cyclopean masonry or architecture. Dr. Clarke says, the Cyclopean Gallery of Tyne exhibits lancet windows almost as ancient as the time of Abraham!

The general character of the Cyclopean style, says Mr. Foshag, in his *Encyclopedia of Antiquities*, "is immense blocks without cement, and though the walls are now irregular, from the smaller stones which filled up the interstices having disappeared, yet they were once so compact as to seem an entire mass. The stones at the foundation were smaller than those above."

The Egyptians, who distinguished themselves very early in a knowledge of the arts, borrowed their style of architecture from India,* whose columns, as being excavated in rock, were massy, and it was consequently heavy, but astounding by its massy grandeur. The general style of the Egyptian architecture consists of enormous blocks, thick columns, walls narrowing upwards with immense impending cornices, but no pediments, because as it never rains in Egypt, there was no necessity for these or roofs. The towers are in the form of truncated pyramids; and the capitals of the columns are continuations of the shaft, carved with leaves, for the first improvement upon the Indian plan was taken from the vegetable kingdom. The earliest Egyptian column was simply a stalk of the lotus topped by its calyx; the base of the column was the foot of the same plant, at its issue from the root, the part nearest the shaft being a bundle of lotus stems. At Philæ, where occurs the finest style of the last era of Egyptian power, the capitals of the columns are the most beautiful, the most ingeniously composed, and the best executed of all those which Deon saw in Egypt. The lotus is the ornament which reigned every where; and it is interlaced with infinite grace in the volutes of the Ionic and Composite capitals.

It was observed by Strabo, that "the Egyptians worshipped every divinity but the Graces;" and this remark was certainly true as to their buildings, which were distinguished by forests of columns, avenues of sphinxes, lions, or rams, large pools with immense colossal statues in front of them, &c. The most surprising feature in the architecture of the Egyptians is its massy and gigantic character, of which the pyramids are existing proofs.

From the architecture of Egypt we proceed to that of Greece, where less wealth but more taste prevailed, and where, indeed, architecture, as a science, may be said to have been cradled,

since it is to the Greeks that we owe the true proportions of architecture as exemplified in the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian orders, which we derive from them.

Vitruvius says that the rustic cabin served as a model among the Greeks for the most superb edifices which men ever built upon the surface of the earth; but architecture and other arts do not appear to have been born in Greece; they were brought thither from Egypt and India. It is therefore the East, and probably Asia on this side the Euphrates, which must be considered as the birth-place of that architecture which Greece brought to the highest perfection.

The monuments which yet remain of Greek architecture are not only splendid, but so numerous as to show that it must have been very widely diffused. These vast remains of splendour and power in the public buildings of the Greeks are not only to be found in the great ruling states, such as Athens, Corinth, and Syracuse, but in little obscure republics, as Posidium, Segesta, and Selinus, whose names alone can be gleaned from history by the diligence of the antiquary; yet has the last and most obscure of these little states left buildings, which surpass in size, strength, and solidity of the construction, not only all that the great potentates of modern times have been able to accomplish, but all that was ever produced by the unlimited resources and despotisms of the Roman emperors. The portico of the great temple of Selinus, in Sicily, consisted of a double peristyle of eight columns in front and seventeen in depth, each of which was ten feet in diameter and fifty feet in height.

It was in Greece and Italy successively that architecture received the different modifications which in the end were denominated orders. The Etruscans and the Dorians departed the least from the ancient simplicity and heavy style. The Ionians introduced some elegance and a species of effeminacy; and when Greece afterwards became the metropolis of the Fine Arts, architecture was more ornamented, and luxury even entered into it.

The Romans borrowed their architecture from the Greeks, but did not imitate them in the modesty of their private dwellings, or in their general taste and judgment. It was distinguished by grandeur and magnificence, monuments of which are still to be seen in the remains of their temples and public buildings; but although this art continued for two centuries almost at its highest perfection, it declined rapidly with the fall of the Roman empire.

When the country was entirely overrun by the Goths, the conquerors, insensible to the beauty and grandeur of the palaces and temples they had become possessed of, or too proud to learn from an enemy they had subdued, introduced their own method of building, which, like that of the Egyptians, was more remarkable for its magnitude than its regularity. It must, however, be acknowledged, that the Goths did in some degree profit by the models the Roman edifices presented, but owing to their want of genius, they copied the defects as often as they imitated its beauties. M.

The Romans bestowed much labour and expense upon the construction of their roads. They strengthened the ground by ramming it, laying it with flints, pebbles, or sand; and sometimes by a lining of masonry, rubbish, bricks, &c., bound together with mortar. In some parts of the Lyonnais clusters of flints have been discovered, cemented with lime, reaching ten or twelve feet deep, and making a mass as hard and compact as marble itself; and after resisting the injuries of time for 1,600 years, it is still scarcely penetrable by all the force of hammers, mattocks, &c. Sometimes their roads were paved with large square free-stones; such are the Applan and Flaminian ways.

During the gale of Wednesday forenoon about 20 feet of the graceful spire of St. Stephen's Church was blown down. The spire, which is about 90 feet in height, was completed with the exception of fixing a cross on the top, and the scaffolding, which had not been taken down, was borne by the wind against the newly laid stonework, which was seen to resist the pressure for some time, and which gave the workmen an opportunity of getting out of the way. At length it fell with a terrific crash through the roof of the church. No person was hurt.—*Hull Packet*.

HOUSE PAINTING.

UNDER the head of DECORATION, there is in the *Athenæum* a paper promising to be one of a series which every house painter would do well to provide himself with. The article in this week's number of that excellent journal is worth far beyond the price of the number to the painter alone, although it is professed therein to be written more for the employer, the owner of the house, than the decorator or builder. We shall not pursue any such course as a purely selfish feeling would suggest by transferring the whole article to our pages—justice to our contemporary demands otherwise—but we cannot resist, nor will we, extracting so much as follows below on the subject of want of taste in professors, as well as patrons, to which we earnestly beg to call the attention of our painter readers. We shall seize an early fitting occasion to have our say upon the subject, and meanwhile invite the active consideration of it by the many who have prepared their minds in small or large degree for the discussion of it. The *Athenæum* says:—

"The great majority of domestic apartments at the present time, even in houses of the first class, have scarcely any marked features of decoration about them which indicate taste or knowledge. They present a monotonous sameness and deficiency of any principles of taste,—the varieties of character which occur, from time to time, being regulated only by the caprices of fashion. Sometimes every room you enter is of one colour. In one of the most splendid of modern houses in the metropolis—we mean in Sutherland House—we have been especially struck with the monotony of white and profuse gilding, in the forms of the Louis Quinze period. Sometimes the rage is for warm shades of colouring, at others for cold, though the preponderating taste seems to take refuge in pale, characterless, neutral colouring. 'People of refinement' (to quote Goethe again) 'have a disinclination to colours. This may be owing partly to weakness of sight, partly to the uncertainty of taste, which readily takes refuge in absolute negation.' During one season salmon colour, as it is called, reigns supreme; then sage colour succeeds salmon; 'drab follows sage or slate; and then all varieties of crimson put out the drab. Each is employed in its turn, without the slightest reference to any of the questions which should determine its appropriateness or otherwise. It is the same with ornamental patterns. One year you find every drawing-room papered with patterns of flowers, another year scrolls will be all the rage. One year small patterns are correct—in the following large only can be tolerated; and whilst each fashion reigned, each was exclusively used. Crimson walls in south aspects, leaden-coloured ones in north aspects. Small patterns applied to rooms large and small, and large patterns to rooms small and large. A like absence of any recognized principles is seen in the carpets and hangings. When crimson walls were oftentimes seen, then was the call for drab and light-coloured carpets. More by luck than any thing else, it is now the fashion to have the carpets darker in colour than the walls. We may often enter a room which, preserving something of each shifting fashion of the few past years, exhibits a violation of every principle of harmonious decoration. Walls of a hot and positive colour in a room with a southern aspect—blue ceilings fuller of colour than the drab carpets, with curtains and hangings of scarlet—and perchance a huge sofa covered with black horse-hair. Not a single thing appropriate or consistent, but the whole a medley of unsuitableness."

This is well sustained and illustrated throughout the article, and a comprehensive handling of the whole question is in promise. A few more remarks in the body of the paper present themselves as being worthy of especial extract for their clearness and simplicity. The young student decorator will do well just to commit it to mind as a sort of catechetical rule, or summary of rules, glossarial or well.

"It may not, perhaps, be necessary to put in an untechnical form a meaning of the terms warm and cold colouring, which may be at once understood. Some colours are called primary, some secondary, some tertiary. Every reader, we assume, knows a blue from a red, red from green, yellow from purple

* Some idea may be formed of the vast grandeur of the monumental architecture of India, when we state that the dwellings and temples excavated out of a mountain of granite the roof of the church. No person was hurt.—*Hull Packet*.